

*Illustration 1: Colonel Bouquet at 1764
Conference with David Owens*

David Owens Sr.

David Owens is a bit of a mystery. According to Sir William Johnson Superintendent of Indian Affairs a David Owens was a soldier who deserted several times, and was the man who killed and scalped a group of Indians in April of 1764; he had taken refuge with them after his desertion. In this same letter he states David was the son of a long time Indian Trader among the Delaware and Shawnee.

Sir William Johnson's statement would suggest that David Owens Sr. could be the son of John Owens Indian Trader. There are some discrepancies in this identification. The fact that the David Owens, notorious for having killed his family, was a soldier described as a Regular and a Corporal doesn't seem to match David son of John who was a Captain in the Militia of Washington County, PA in the 1770's. Also the notorious David was attached to a Company of Highlanders who were at one point based in New York. Adding to the confusion another David Owens was attached to Colonel Thomas Dunbar's 48th Irish Regiment and was Court Martialed for desertion. This Regiment was also based out of New York and made an appearance in Western Pennsylvania with Braddock's expedition. This David was sentenced to death, but it's unknown whether that sentence was carried out or he was reprieved? According to a newspaper article printed at the time that particular David Owens was executed. The newspaper article could have been in error however?

A contemporary source described the David who deserted to live with the Indians as an Irishman. According to Robert Kirkwood the David he became acquainted with, during the Forbes campaign, was

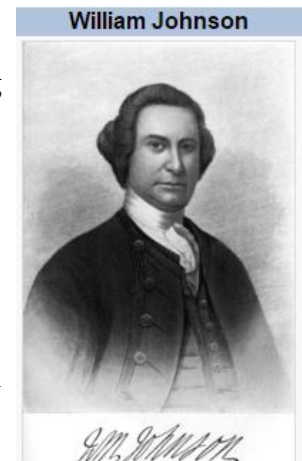
born near Conococheague Creek, Pennsylvania.

According to a memoir by Robert Kirkwood, "Through So Many Dangers", a David Owens was held captive in 1758 by Shawnee at Fort Duquesne, just before it was abandoned and burned. They were supposedly taken captive during Forbes campaign to take the French fort. According to some accounts all of those who had been captured were executed before the British arrived to take the fort. If the story about being held prisoner is fiction does that mean David Owens was a fictional character in this story? It sounds like Kirkwood probably did know a David Owens. According to Sir William Johnson, David Owens was a soldier in Capt. Mclean's company. Robert Kirkwood and Capt. Mclean were attached to the 62nd Highlanders. That battalion came to America in 1756 to defend the borders during the French and Indian War. Capt. Allan Mclean constructed Fort Dewart in what today is now Somerset, Pennsylvania. David's father owned land in that area of Pennsylvania, at Turkey Foot.

Pennsylvania being founded by Penn as a Quaker Colony didn't have a militia system. The western frontier settlers had to arrange for their own defense. After Braddock's defeat Pennsylvania organized its own Regularly enlisted army. David Owens probably became a regular in the provincial forces and may have earned a spot with the British regulars? ¹"Most of the more than nine thousand men who joined the regular army in North America before 1758, many serving in the Ohio Valley campaigns of 1758- 1764, came from Pennsylvania and Maryland. Also "...a battalion of Gaelic-speaking Scottish Highlanders were joined by four companies of the Royal American Regiment.." This is probably the same battalion Capt. Mclean belonged to, because he was said to have fought with the Royal Americans. The Royal Americans was made up of many American Colonial soldiers who fought with the British regulars (regulars are paid soldiers). David was likely a soldier in the Royal Americans.

Apparently when David was living with his Indian family he purchased items from the Trader David Franks. He appears with some Delawares in an accounting of Franks' losses. Actually the entry only says John Owens, Son. This loss occurred in 1763 according to these records².

According to some accounts David Owens deserted in 1761 from Capt. McLain's Independent Company and resurfaces a few years later in April 1764, in Northampton County, PA with scalps of Indians and a child captive with him. Benjamin Franklin sends a letter to Peter Collison describing the details of this incident. He doesn't say anything about David killing his own family. Sir William Johnson stated some Indians told him David Owens killed his wife and some of her relations when they were out hunting.



David Owens wasn't punished for his actions because a bounty had been offered for Indian scalps as a means of retribution during Pontiac's rebellion. He wasn't imprisoned for desertion either. Instead he was appointed to be Colonel Henry Bouquet's Interpreter for his 1764 expedition into the Ohio County that fall. The expedition was a planned invasion designed to end Pontiac's rebellion.

David Owens received a pass from Gov. John Penn to travel to join Colonel Henry Bouquet on April

¹ R. S. Stephenson, "Pennsylvania Provincial Soldiers," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, Volume 62 Number 2 (Spring 1995) (<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/27773801?uid=3739560&uid=2&uid=4&uid=3739256&sid=21106789176453>)

² Sir William Johnson's papers page 355 Volume 5

26, 1764. The pass said “he behaving as becometh to all his majesty's Liege Subjects.” Once the Natives were subdued by the invasion of 500 troops a conference was held in which Bouquet asked for the return of captives being held by the Natives. David Owens is listed as an interpreter at this conference. It was said the Indians captured David briefly while he was in the Ohio Country in order to get justice for the murders he had committed. He was released quickly however.

After the fall conference David Owens was appointed interpreter at Fort Pitt. Col. Henry Bouquet made the request to Sir William Johnson that he should be appointed to this post; he states, “Owens speaks the Delaware perfectly I would be glad you would appoint him Interpreter to remain there (Nov. 1764).” This appointment didn't seem to work out. He was not behaving as befits his majesty's subject at this point. Samuel Wharton stated in a letter to Benjamin Franklin dated December 19, 1764, “³That Colonel Bouquet sent some Canada Indians, with One Owens, (The Person, Who appeared before the Commissioners and claimed the Reward for scalping so many Indians) to invite the Hostages to return to Fort Pitt; When unfortunately some Difference arose between One of Them (an Indian) and this Owens, Who immediately took up his Riffle and shot Him dead, upon the Spott.” This from Thomas Gage to Sir William Johnson dated April 25, 1765 “but it's said from Fort-Pitt, that they went home, having been terrified by Owens the Interpreter, who is now with you⁴. This Fellow it seems in a drunken Frolick, acquainted the Hostages that we intended to murder them.” Based on these reports it's hard to say how long David Owens remained at his Fort Pitt post?

On April 29, 1765 David Owens was present at Johnson Hall, with Sir William Johnson, at a Six Nations conference (as confirmed in General Thomas Gage's letter. I don't think they wanted him back at Fort Pitt). David acted as interpreter. This is the last mention I've found where David Owens is acting as an interpreter for Sir William Johnson.



Illustration 2:
Henry Bouquet

We find David Owens living near his brother John Owens Jr. in Dublin Township, Bedford County, Pennsylvania in 1767; they appear this year on a taxlist. It's not been proven that David Owens, son of John Owens, was the notorious David outlined above. The David with John Jr. in 1767 is more than likely John Owens Sr.'s son. There are similarities and differences between the men. Both had father's that were Indian Traders, and both were Native American language interpreters. Also, both were involved with the military. It also sounds like both had a father named.

The John Owens Sr. family returned to the Tenmile Creek area after the Seven Years War and Pontiac's rebellion. David Owens received land grants for land located on Tenmile Creek, PA. Apparently the Owens family returned to the Tenmile Creek area in late 1769. In September of that year David Owens brought a white man who killed some Indians from the “Cheet” River (Cheat River) to Fort Pitt.

David was a private with the militia in Washington County, Pennsylvania from 1777 to 1781. He also participated in Dunmore's War in 1774. ⁵“Simon Girty being returned from Wheeling to Pittsburgh

³ Clarence Walworth Alvord, *The Critical Period, 1763-1765, Volume 10* (Springfield, Illinois: Illinois State Historical Library, 1915), page 376; digital images, Google Books, (www.google.com : accessed ; David killed an Indian at Fort Pitt.

⁴ Alexander C. Flick Phd., *The Papers of Sir William Johnson: Volume IV* (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1925), [Page 723]; digital images, Internet Archive, (<https://archive.org/stream/papersofsirwilli04john>

⁵ Documentary history of Dunmore's war, 1774 by Thwaites, Reuben Gold, 1853-1913; State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Sons of the American

gives the following information the 11th August 1774. That he met David Owens and twelve men upon Captina on their return from attacking the upper Shawnesse Towns where they had been with Major McDonald who told him that the day before the pilots Owens being one had reached Wackitomika they came across an Indian coming towards them at whom Owens fired but missed him then the guides found a horse with some baggage on him.”

James Hook purchased 400 acres from David Owens on Tenmile Creek for 2000 pounds on March 1, 1780. A witness to this deed named William English was killed, like David's brother John II, in the spring of 1781.

The author of the book “Indian Blood” felt that the David Owens named in a 1774 writ from Hanna's court, was the same David as John I's son. This writ directed the sale of the personal property of David Owens. Hanna's court enforced Pennsylvania law in South West Pennsylvania, and the court in at Fort Dunmore (previously Fort Pitt) enforced Virginia law in the same area. David signed the petition below which was filed with Dunmore's court minutes.

⁶April 18, 1776

Augusta County

On the petition of James Mitchell & others setting forth that a road is established from Conrad Walter, by Wm. Teagarden's ferry, to the Mouth of Wheeling, which is very inconvenient to your Petrs, & praying that a review of the s'd road be made, it is ord that Ebenezer Zane, James McMahnnon, David Owens, Henry Vanmatre, Dav'd Evans, Geo. Cox, James McCoy, & John McClalan, or any 6 of them, being first sworn, view if the old road estab is conv, if not make a report of the most conv way and the inconv and conv there of to the next court; that the surveyors desist from working on the road until the report is returned. (David Owens had a claim on Graves Creek in West Virginia. This land was surveyed by George Roger Clark)

In 1772 David Owens and Rev. David Jones (said to be his Brother-in-law) went on an exploratory expedition to what is today West Virginia. They traveled 300 miles south of Fort Pitt with the Revolutionary War hero George Rogers Clark. In 1782 David Owens joined his brother and George Rogers Clark in Illinois Country.

According to David Owens Sr.'s son, David Jr., he and his family migrated to Louisville, Kentucky in April 1782 where they joined David Sr.'s half brother Capt. George Owens.

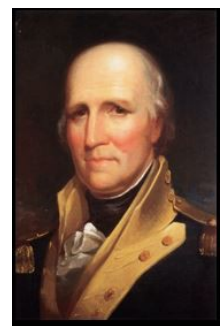


Illustration 3:

George Rogers

Clark

David acted as a Shawnee language translator in the Illinois Country. Records for this area mention David Owens as an interpreter. “Major George Walls at Fort Nelson issued a rifle, sword, belt, lead and flints to interpreter David Owens for a friendly Shawnee Indian. Names: Martin Carney. Fort Nelson issued 15 day rations of corn and beef to indian

Revolution. Wisconsin Society; Kellogg, Louise Phelps Published 1905

⁶ Boyd Crumrine, *Virginia court records in southwestern Pennsylvania : records of the District of West Augusta and Ohio and Yohogania Counties, Virginia, 1775-1780* (Baltimore : Genealogical Pub. Co, 1974), Page 60; digital images, (: accessed ; Petition.

interpreter David Owens for Shawnee indians. Names: Major George Walls, William Clark.⁷

In April of 1783 a Mr. Owens is arrested for damning Fort Nelson. Considering David Owens character that may have been him?

David Owens, and his children, were early settlers of what would become Clarksville, Indiana. Settling the area in the 1780's they were granted land based their early settlement. David is said to have died in 1809.

Spouses

Maria (Delaware Indian) sister-in-law of Teedyuscung

Lettice Jones 1739-1833

Children

John Owens 1768-1834

David Owens 1775-1850

James Owens 1775/1780-aft. 1830

“ BURNETS-FIELD, June 18th, 1764.

“ Sir:

“ I have just received your favour of the 9th Inst., on my way to Niagara, which deprives me of the pleasure of writing to you as fully as I would.

“ I am heartily sorry for the losses sustained about Fort Loudon, and on the Frontiers of Virginia, all which will, I hope, be shortly put a stop to. In the mean time, I cannot but approve of your

⁷ Society of Colonial Wars <http://sril.gradeless.com/clarkv11.htm>

gratifying the desire of the people in your Province, by a bounty on Scalps, and I heartily wish success to the design, & to guard as much as in my power against the ill consequence of their killing any of the Friend Indians. I shall make **them** all acquainted therewith, & caution **them** by no means to appear on your Frontiers till affairs are settled.

"David Owens was a Corporal in Captⁿ M^cClean's Comp^y and lay once in Garrison at my house. He deserted several times, as I am informed, & went to live among the Delawares & Shawanese, with whose Language he was acquainted, **His Father** having been long a Trader amongst them.

"The Circumstances relating to **his** leaving the Indians have been told me by several Indians. That he went out a hunting with **his** Indian Wife and several of her relations, most of whom, with **his** Wife, he killed and scalped as they slept. As he was always much attached to Indians, I fancy he began to fear he was unsafe amongst **them**, and killed **them**, rather to make **his** peace with the English, than from any dislike either to **them** or their Principles.

"I hope to be at Niagara within 10 or 12 days, when I shall do every thing in my power for obtaining an advantageous peace with the Indians, who desire it for the benefit of the Colonies. Tho' the slender efforts hitherto made use of, and our great backwardness, will increase the confidence of the Indians to such a Pitch as must in a little time occasion another Rupture, unless by friendship and favours we secure **them** in our Interest.

"I am with great esteem, Sir,

"Your most obedient humble Servant,

"W^m JOHNSON.

INDIANS TO GOV. HAMILTON, 1761.

Dear Brother:

I have acquainted you wher I am know at Mowhewamick, and from that I take my Journey to go to Eastown, where we Kindled the fier, therfor Brother, I Desier that you would meet me there or where you shall opoyint, for I Supose that you have wated so Long that you are in redyness to meet us Brother. I Desier you to met your Brothers to gave me an answer at Bethlehan.

A Six Road Belt: We Desiere you, Brother, to Stop all Strong Drink, & to Send me Some Wagons and Provisions, a Sum Paint for my young People; that is all, at present, from your Brother, King of the Six Nations.

Ritten by David Owens.

Directed.

To His Honner the Governor, James Hambleton.

Justis Horsfiel your Desiered to Send this Post Hast to the Governor.

PASSPORT TO DAVID OWENS, 1764.

Whereas, I have directed the Bearer, David Owens, to proceed immediately to Lancaster and Carlisle, with a Letter to Col^o Bouquet, on his Majestys Service; I do, therefore, require all Persons within this Province to permit the said Owens to pass unmolested on his way to those Places, he behaving as becometh to all his Majesty's Liege Subjects.

Given under my Hand & Seal at Arms, &c.

April 26, 1764.

Copy.

At a Conference with the Six Nations
and Delawares at Johnson Hall
April 29th 1765.

Present

Sir William Johnson Bart.	Capt. Johnson
Daniel Clause Esq.	Lieut. Hend. Wernp
Guy Johnson Esq.	M. Barent Wernp
Capt. Hend. Fry	M. Kirtland
John Butler Esq.	M. Arthur & Co.

Interpreters

Henry Montour

M. Parthuis

David Owens for the Delawares

Thomas King stood up and went thro
the Ceremony of Condolence with the
Six Nations in the Name of Sir William
Johnson with 3 Strings of Wampum
which ended, Sir William
addressed the Indians

Protheren

(April 26, 1764)

GOV. JOHN PENN TO COL. HENRY BOUQUET

[B. M., Add. MSS. 21650, f. 164, A. L. S.]

Philadelphia April 26th 1764

Dr Sir /

This is only to introduce Mr Owen to you. I did not chuse to trust him with the other letter, for fear he should never deliver it, as I believe he is not to be too much confided in from his general Character.

I am with great Regard
Sir

586 Sir William Johnson Papers

I have already received upwards of 200 Captives including the Children Born from White Women married to Savages, which I have obliged them to give up.

M^{rs} M^{rs} Kee Incloses you all the Speeches and Messages received & delivered during the whole Transactions Therefore I shall not trouble you with particulars.

The Deputies will proceed from Fort Pitt through the Woods to Your House, wth Captain Artell and 19 Cocknawagee Indians who have joined me from the Lakes, and have behaved very well, I beg leave to recommend You M^{rs} Artell, who might be usefully employed amongst the Indians, & who appears to be disposed to forward our Interest wth them I shall send an Interpreter with them and as Owens speaks the Delaware perfectly, I would be glad You would appoint him Interpreter to remain at Fort Pitt.

I must not omit to mention to you the absolute Necessity of making the Six Nations recall those of their People, who under the General Name of Mingoes infest the Country. They are the most Infamous and Corrupted of all the savages, living altogether by Robberies, & always spreading false Reports to embroil Matters, wth a View to have a more favourable Opportunity of plundering Friends & Foes; They have stolen from us at this Camp upwards of Fifty Horses, which distress me greatly. If the Six Nations chuse to have some of their People to live this Way, They should send them under the Direction of a Chief, who could keep them in Order.

H. B.

to ascertain the Posts, where it may be permitted and where not.

The Indians have used the same Delays in coming to Fort Pitt as they have to you. The last Acc^{ts}, from thence were late in March, and then it was said, they would be there in four Days. There seems to be something hatching amongst them. Two of the Delaware Hostages desired on some Acc^{ts}: to go to Fort Bedford, who have been no more heard of. It was apprehended they had been killed; but it's said from Fort-Pitt, that they went home, having been terrified by *Owens* the Interpreter, who is now with you. This Fellow it seems in a drunken Frolick, acquainted the Hostages that we intended to murder them.

I am with great Regard,

Dear Sir,

Your most obedient,

humble Servant,

THO^s. GAGE

St. Wm. JOHNSON Recd.

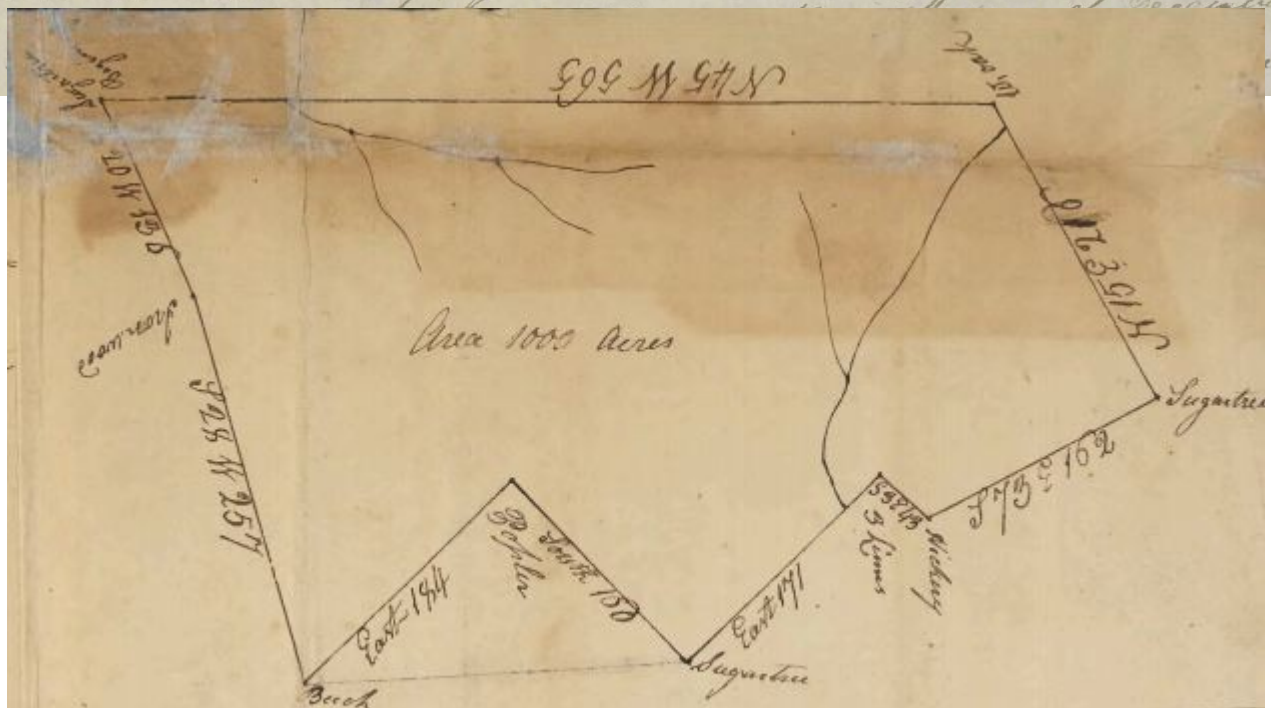
Extract of a Letter from Fort Pitt, September 9, 1769.

“ Last Sunday, in the Afternoon, a Council was held in the Governor's House, between the Commanding Officer and sundry Chiefs of different Nations of Indians, on the late Murder of an Indian in Pittsburgh by Cornelius Dogherty. As there had been, some Time before, a white Man killed by an Indian, there was but little said on either Side, only advising each other to keep fast Hold of the Chain of Friendship, and giving some Tobacco and Provisions, which the Indians very readily accepted of.-----This Afternoon one David Owens brought a white Man from Cheat River, who was one of a Party that murdered an Indian, and two Children, in the Indian's Hunting Cabin, in the Forks of Cheat River. This Murder, so immediately after the Council was held, will, no Doubt, create Uneasiness in the Minds of the Indians, the Delaware Nation in particular, as the Persons murdered were of that Tribe: The Man is now confined in our Guard-house.”

No. 22.

Jones vs. Tomlinson.—Orator is David Jones. In 1772 David Jones made a settlement on Grave Creek, in Ohio County. Joseph Tomlinson obtained a settlement certificate for himself and Charles McLean. In 1770 David Owings made settlement near Jones, which was confirmed by law of 1799. Settlement made in 1771 on land of Joseph Coving, land claimed by Jones, by Nathaniel Tomlinson, who transferred to Joseph. In 1772 Nathaniel sold to Campbell and Talin. Benjamin Biggs was a justice of Ohio County, and Silas Hedges was sheriff in 1785. The Commissioners to settle unpatented lands in 1781 were: James Neal, Charles Martin, and William Haymond (Hayward); William McClung was chairman. Charles McClean deposes, in Fayette County, Pennsylvania, 1804: He first went to Grave Creek Flats in 1772, where he saw George R. Clarke, who surveyed the Flats into various tracts. Plaintiff acted under the Indiana Company. Charles McClean moved with his family to Grave Creek Flats in December, 1773, and settled at McClains's Spring. He left in May, 1774, in consequence of the breaking out of Dunmore's war. Morgan Jones deposes, in Jueen County, Pennsylvania: He first visited the Flats in 1772. Plaintiff had employed George Rogers Clark to survey the Flats into tracts. The first tract was laid off for Morgan Jones. Second for Joseph Tomlinson. Third for David Jones, plaintiff. The line passed over one of the little *graves*. Charles McDonald was also one of the settlers.

agreed line between him and the Owens, but at that time
 on the part of Jones denied that he claimed under
 Owens, as well as this Deponent recollects. This Deponent
 was not with the party all the time they were on the land



October 27th 1784 Surveyed for David Jones 1000 Acres of Land in
 a Commission Warrant No 1643

State of Indiana }
 County of Clark }

David Owens of the State
 aforesaid being duly sworn makes oath & says,
 that his first acquaintance with Captain George Owens
 commenced sometime in April 1782, at which time
 this affiant in company with his father removed to
 Louisville in the State of Kentucky. Captain George Owens
 was at that time in the fort at Louisville, in command
 of his company, I was informed by Captain George Owens

Mr. David Owens

You are hereby in consequence of your appointment as Indian Interpreter, to proceed in Company with the Shawanese messengers, taking in your care the Speeches I find to the Shawanese + Wyndots you are to deliver these speeches to Mr. James Sherlock and give him all the assistance in your power to render essential Service to your Country. You are to advise with Mr. Sherlock what is, or may be expedient for the public Good, having in View that you Return to this place as quick as may be done without injuring the public welfare, + that in case Mr. Sherlock should not be immediately ready to accompany you, that you use your Best endeavours to bring home under your Escort all the prisoners which may be ready for your taking in charge from Mr. Sherlock.

Given under my hand at Fort Nelson (Falls of Ohio)

This 13th April 1784

Signed Geo. Walls

Maj. Comdr.